

and i know we'll be okay by writerblender

Series: [looking too closely \[2\]](#)

Category: Stranger Things (TV 2016)

Genre: Gen, they have a pool party !! and are cute together !!, this is soft

Language: English

Characters: Billy Hargrove, Eleven (Stranger Things), Max Mayfield, Mike Wheeler, Steve Harrington

Relationships: Billy Hargrove/Steve Harrington, Eleven & Billy Hargrove

Status: Completed

Published: 2018-01-26

Updated: 2018-01-26

Packaged: 2022-04-20 16:30:39

Rating: Teen And Up Audiences

Warnings: No Archive Warnings Apply

Chapters: 1

Words: 1,911

Publisher: archiveofourown.org

Summary:

"Chicken."

"There's pizza inside," he replies. He's not sure why she's come all this way to ask him for something so simple but whatever, he thinks. She's still a kid.

That's when he feels her poke his cheek again.

[or the gang has a pool party at steve's house: featuring chicken, crushes, and second chances]

and i know we'll be okay

Billy's lying on the side of the pool, his feet dangling in the water and head resting in Steve's lap. He's just about to nod off to the constant rhythm of Steve's fingers running through his hair and warmth of the sun on his face when he feels something poke his cheek. He ignores it, thinking it's just Steve teasing him at first, when he feels it again, more persistent this time. He cracks an eye open to find Jane kneeling next to him, mischievous grin on her face.

"Chicken."

"There's pizza inside," he replies, shutting his eyes once again. He's not sure why she's come all this way to ask him for something so simple but *whatever*, he thinks. She's still a kid.

That's when he feels her poke his cheek again.

He opens both his eyes now, moving so that he can support himself on his elbows. Steve rests his hand on his shoulder. "Do you want me to heat up Harrington's leftovers?" Steve makes a noise of protest behind him but Billy knows he won't care. They both know that Billy would do anything for Jane - whether it be as simple as making her dinner or as dangerous as using himself as a human shield when demodogs advance on the cabin and Jane is too busy trying to protect Hopper to realize she's in danger. Steve *knows* - has seen the scars from both kitchen knives and demogorgon teeth - and can't seem to stop Billy from dropping everything to help Jane. When it doesn't get Billy hurt, it fills his heart with love for his boyfriend.

Jane scrunches up her nose as she shakes her head. She points to the pool and then Max, who is currently giggling with Lucas over the color their mouths have turned after several popsicles. "Chicken," she repeats.

"You mean the game?" Steve asks and Jane nods enthusiastically, curls bouncing.

"You and Max," Jane says. "Me and Billy. Team."

Steve is on his feet and rushing towards Max before Billy or Jane can say anything else. "You're on, Hargrove!" He calls over his shoulder.

Jane grins triumphantly.

...

The idea comes to Billy while he and Jane are seated at the edge of the pool, waiting while Steve and Max review their "game plan for tactile defeat." Jane has started to blow up one of the pool floaties for her arm, listening to him hum along to the radio as they wait.

She takes a quick pause, mischievous glint reappearing in her eyes, when, suddenly, a splash of water hits Billy in the face. He sputters for a few seconds before he reaches down, using his hand to splash water on Jane in retaliation. "You can control the water with your...?" Billy points to her head and Jane nods quickly.

It's Billy's turn to grin.

...

Mike Wheeler is going to kill Billy Hargrove.

He knows *when* (as soon as possible) and *why* (for Jane's honor) but he's not quite sure *how*. He's half the size of Billy; he wouldn't be able to take Billy without some sort of advantage. He thinks that, maybe, if Dustin can distract Steve inside the house for long enough, he might be able to jump on Billy's shoulders and drown him. He's only broken out of his fantasy of murdering Billy in cold blood when he feels Will's hand shaking his shoulder.

"So, what do you think? You in?" Will asks.

Mike blinks at him. "Think of what?"

"Chicken. You and me versus Dustin and Lucas," Will explains.

"Not fair!" Lucas pipes up from where he's seated, stained popsicle stick in his hand.

"What do you mean 'not fair'?" Dustin's joined the argument now and Mike isn't quite sure that he's following.

"Not fair cause they wouldn't stand a chance! We'd kick their asses!" Lucas laughs as he and Dustin high-five.

"No way!" Will cries, shoving Dustin playfully in retaliation. "We can totally take them, right, Mike?" When Will turns to get the reassurance from him, he finds that Mike has gone back to staring at Jane and Billy. The two are high-fiving; Jane looks elated as they claim another victory against Max and Steve.

"Hey, earth to Mike!" Lucas is the one to break him out of his trance, waving his hands wildly in front of his face. When Mike startles, turning to look at the rest of the boys, Dustin speaks.

"What is your problem, man?"

"Billy. Billy is my problem," Mike huffs as he plants himself onto one of Steve's lawn chairs, folding his arms over his chest.

At his comment, the other three boys exchange nervous glances. While they've come a long way from the night at the Byers, with many apologies from Billy and hesitations to let him join the gang from everyone but Jane, Will, and Steve. In fact, most of the boys are *still* wary of Billy's presence.

"Did he mess with you?" Dustin asks slowly.

"No," Mike admits. "He's stealing El."

"Stealing her?" Lucas repeats.

"He's all she talks about!" Mike practically yells, turning his gaze away from where Billy and Jane have claimed yet *another* victory. "All week it's been '*Billy this*' and '*Billy that*'. I'm sick of hearing about Billy."

"So?" Dustin asks and Mike looks at him in horror.

"Yeah," Will continues. "Doesn't he help her with stuff? You know, reading? Keeps her company and makes her dinner when Hop's

busy?"

"He and her *understand*... things. Parent things. Weird, telepathy things," Lucas chimes in.

"Since when are you on his side?!" Mike cries, eyes widening as he stares at Lucas. "He tried to kill you!"

Lucas raises his hands in self defense, despite Mike being nowhere near him. "He and El went through stuff I don't get, okay? At least he apologized."

"Plus, she's not really *yours*, Mike. Just because you guys kissed doesn't mean you *own* her," Will adds.

Mike groans into his hands as Dustin claps, ending the conversation before Mike can argue against them again.

"C'mon, Lucas," Dustin says, shaking Lucas' shoulder as the other boy lets out a whoop of excitement. They both run towards the pool, jumping in as soon as they get to the edge.

"Will! Mike!" Lucas yells. "Come on! Last one in has to babysit Erica with me!"

Mike and Will exchange a quick look before they're both up, racing towards Steve's pool as fast as they can.

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The grin on Jane's face is priceless.

The clear joy in her expression is something that Billy's never seen before, no matter how much time he's spent with her. Whenever he stops by Hopper's cabin, Jane's wearing a smile, eager to read or help him make dinner. The permanent, small smile that she wears is nothing compared to this. That's something she's used to; innocence, naivety, simple happiness of living her life. This joy that she's experiencing right now? Billy would give anything for her to smile this way every day.

Jane is still on his shoulders; Max is now off Steve's, splashing Billy

and Jane playfully with her hands. Jane shrieks as water hits her face, giggling almost immediately afterwards as she sends her own tiny wave over Max's head in retaliation.

Steve brushes the wet strands of hair from his face, turning to glare at Billy. "Alright, you two." He shoots up a quick, stern but playful look up to Jane. "This round, *no* powers."

"What?!" Billy cries. "Who said *anything* about using powers?"

"I did," Steve teases. Max swims up behind him, wrapping her arms around his neck and hanging onto him from behind. "I know the game that you two are playing at."

"Are you accusing Jane of cheating?" Billy retaliates, eyes playful. "Yeah right, Harrington. She would *never*."

"Oh, I *know* she wouldn't, Hargrove," It's Steve's turn to gaze at his boyfriend playfully. "I'm saying that *you* would."

"You have no proof," Billy counters.

"Every *single* time before Max has fallen off my shoulders or I've lost my balance, you've tapped Jane's ankle twice with your thumb," Steve replies instantly, smirk on his lips. Max's eyes widen behind him when she realizes what's going on.

"Sorry, Steve," Jane says from above Billy. She pats the top of Billy's head once. "Good team."

Billy looks up at her in shock. She's still beaming. "Did you just rat us out, Jane?"

Jane shrugs. "Friends don't lie." Her face scrunches up in a half-smile.

Billy only laughs.

...

Jane and Max are both lying on Steve's lawn chairs, watching through too-big sunglasses as the boys continue to wrestle each other in the pool. Lucas and Dustin are still locked in an intense game of

Chicken with Will and Mike, currently winning 3-2. Steve and Billy are in a fight of their own, playful wrestling intermixed with soft touches and quick kisses.

After Billy pulls Steve closer to him to press a kiss to his temple, Max lets out a long, dramatic sigh. Jane turns to look at the red-headed girl, impressed with how similar it sounds to her favorite soap opera character's.

"Max?" She asks simply.

Max throws an arm dramatically over her eyes and sunglasses. "I can't believe it."

"Can't believe it?" Jane repeats. "Something wrong?"

Max lifts her arm so she can look Jane in the eyes. "I sat on Steve Harrington's shoulders today. We sat on their shoulders," she points to where Steve and Billy have resumed wrestling each other in the water. "That's, like, *awesome*."

"So?" Jane prompts her on.

"So!" Max groans, lying back down. "So, that should be *super* awesome and, yet, my brother is *still* somehow doing better than me. I can't *believe* my brother and I have a crush on the same guy."

Jane and Max meet eyes and dissolve into giggles at the exact same time.

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Later that day, the kids are all huddled under towels and blankets in the living room, watching *Mad Max* on Steve's TV and eating the last over the leftover pizza. Steve can hear them all cheering when something exciting happens on the screen and Max's quick voice adding commentary as often as she can before she's shushed by the rest of the group for talking over the TV. He's standing in the kitchen, waiting for the popcorn to finish cooking. Billy has his arms around his waist, resting his head on his shoulder from behind.

Steve'd spent a lot of his life alone. His parents weren't around if they

could help it and, after Nancy, he'd figured that this summer would be the same way he'd spent the last part of his year -- alone and swallowed by grief, especially when he looked outside to see the pool that Barb had died in. He thought that things would never change; that things couldn't possibly look up for him. Not after Nancy. Not after the horrors he'd spent so long trying to bury underneath this town, back to where they belong.

Steve thinks, as he grabs one of Billy's hands in his and brings it to his mouth, kissing his fingers gently, that maybe -- just *maybe* -- he's wrong. He thinks, as Billy hums into his sweater that maybe -- just maybe -- he won't be alone. That maybe he'll be able to make new memories; ones full of movie nights and the kids talking excitedly; of Billy and his soft touches.

This could be the summer of healing. The summer of making new memories. The summer of building a *home*.

Author's Note:

the duffer brothers: billy and karen

me, an intellectual: billy and getting the help he needs and finally getting away from his father and finding real friends and love

credit to the absolutely wonderful @fredsythe on tumblr for the idea and for allowing me to write this. much love !!

i apologize if i didn't accurately describe the pool game correctly. i know i played chicken as a kid but i don't?? remember?? who knows this is just me rambling bc i feel like i didn't do it justice oh well

if you want, hmu on [tumblr](#)

kudos and comments keep my household plants

watered and skin clear !!